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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

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By HK-m/39, NARA, Date 4/17/91

DATE: February 3, 1959

SUBJECT: Berlin and Germany

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PARTICIPANTS: M. Hervé Alphand, French Ambassador  
M. Charles Lucet, Minister, French Embassy

APPROVED JNG 2/11/59

The Secretary  
Mr. Livingston T. Merchant, Assistant Secretary  
Mr. Matthew J. Loomam, WE

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M. Alphand

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The Secretary stated he did not think there was any disposition in the country to be anything but firm on Berlin; however, it was more difficult when it came to the precise actions to be taken. He felt there was a danger that the Western position might be "nibbled away" by reluctance on our part to stand firm on apparently minor points that might not appear worth making an issue of. He believed, however, that we had a sound position, which could be dramatized, in maintaining that for one of the German victors, namely the Soviet Union, to turn over to the defeated element controls affecting the other victors was intolerable. Technically there was still a state of war with Germany. We should accordingly not accept substitution of the GDR authorities for the Soviet authorities on control of access to Berlin. We would be willing to identify ourselves at control points, but we would not accept control or inspection by the GDR authorities. Details as to the precise actions that might be necessary would require further study.

Regarding the date for a possible foreign ministers conference, the Secretary said that it had not been our opinion that suggesting a date prior to May 27 might be interpreted as a sign of weakness, particularly in view of the fact that as of last September 30, we had already suggested a conference with the Soviets on German reunification and European security. Moreover, irrespective of the Soviet proposals, we would not be disposed to limit the agenda solely to discussion of the Berlin issue. Nevertheless, the Secretary stated, in our reply to the Soviets it might be preferable to propose holding a conference "at a mutually satisfactory time and place".

The Secretary mentioned the likelihood that as a result of our proposing a conference on Germany and European security, the Soviets might raise the issue of composition at such a conference.

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The Secretary said he was inclined to agree, particularly in view of the fact that the current nuclear test suspension conference in Geneva was on the verge of collapse. In this connection, the Secretary stated, he thought the Soviet position insisting on unanimity for the control commission was ludicrous. It tended to confirm his earlier impression that the Soviets would be unwilling to accept genuine controls.

In conclusion the Secretary stated that he thought that the French and U.S. positions were close together and agreement should be able to be reached between them on these matters.

The Secretary agreed and mentioned that he had heard a news broadcast to the effect that Prime Minister Macmillan might visit Moscow.

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